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Jean Astruc.

By Emeritus Professor Sir Alexander Simpson, M.D., D.Sc., LL.D.

"This work was composed some time since, but I hesitated to publish it, fearing that the self-styled free-thinkers who seek support on all sides might make an ill-use of it for lessening the authority of the Pentateuch. A learned man, very zealous for religion, to whom I showed it, dispelled my scruples. He has assured me that what I supposed about the documents of which Moses had made use in composing Genesis, had already been advanced in essence by several authors (such as the Abbés Fleury and le François) in works well approved, that the special application I was making of the suggestion in distributing Genesis in several columns, representative of these documents, made no change whatever in the text of the Book of Genesis, or made no more change than what had been done in dividing it into chapters and verses; and that so far from being in any way prejudicial to religion, it could not fail, on the contrary, to be very helpful in serving to remove or clear up several difficulties which present themselves to the readers of the book, and under the weight of which commentators have been hitherto almost overwhelmed. On his advice, then, I have decided to publish this work and submit it to the judgment of the enlightened, whose observations I will be pleased to hear. I protest beforehand very sincerely that if those who have a right to criticise, and whose criticism I ought to respect, find my conjectures either false or dangerous, I am ready to abandon them; or better, I abandon them now. Preference for my ideas will never prevail with me over the love of truth and of religion."

So runs the preface to a small volume (525 pp.) written in French

and published in 1753, of which the Advocates, the University, the New College, and the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh have each a copy in their respective libraries. The title-page tells that it contains *Conjectures sur les Mémoires originaux dont il paraît que Moyse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse.* Avec des Remarques qui appuient ou qui éclaircissent ces Conjectures." It bears the motto:—

> "Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante
> Trita solo."

The author's name is not given; but it was well known to have been written by a physician, Jean Astruc, as the respective librarians have noted.

The Book.

From the book one gathers that the author was an accomplished scholar, well versed in various languages and accustomed to read the Bible in the original. It does not occur to him to doubt that the Pentateuch came from the hand of Moses and that it is all to be accepted as part of a divine revelation. But he uses his imagination. He wonders how Moses knew all that he has set down here. Moses' own memory could only go back to the things he treats of when he gets into Exodus. How did he know about the creation, the deluge, and the rest of the Genesis record? Either he must have been taught by special revelation, or he learned them from those who could tell the stories. Astruc does not know of any who hold by the first of these alternatives. Moses, though in other parts of the Pentateuch he claims, like later prophets, direct divine authority for his messages, speaks throughout Genesis simply as a historian. It must be supposed, therefore, that he derives the events he records from ancestors who during the 2,369 years of the Usserian reckoning had successively witnessed them and passed on the narratives to their descendants. "All the same," says Astruc, "it must also be admitted that Moses was enlightened in a special way, and by inspiration in his choice of the facts and attendant circumstances he had received from his forefathers, and that we owe to the history he has bequeathed to us the foundation of the Divine Faith."

The suggestion is discussed that the stories have come down through "Shem who had seen Lamech, who had seen Adam, and who had himself been seen at least by Abraham, who had seen Jacob, who had seen those who might have told Moses." But he sets it aside in favour

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of the idea, already entertained by Le Clerc, Simon, and others, that the Hebrew race were in possession of a series of written memoranda dealing with their origin and history. These Moses collected and may be supposed to have kept them in portions according to the incidents related, each in its entirety so that nothing should be lost. Hence repetitions, with variations of the same story; hence some anachronisms as to the order of events; hence the predominant use in one passage of Elohim, the common name of God, and in others of Jehovah, "God's great name, the name which expresses his essence." The Jews shrank from pronouncing this name, and read Adonai instead, and put the vowel points of Adonai under the consonant of the sacred name. If Genesis be decomposed according to the prevalence of these names into distinct sections, placing those with Elohim in a column A, and those with Jehovah in a column B, the differences in the documents become clearer. Then it might be necessary to have a column C for a few facts recorded thrice, and a fourth column D for passages outside the proper Hebrew history and where no name of God is employed. There may be further subdivisions and arrangements of columns going as far as L or M. But Astruc thought the construction of the book would be sufficiently indicated by the use of the A, B, D columns, which he accordingly proceeded to arrange with the gaps in successive chapters in one column filled up by the verses to be found in the corresponding chapter of the neighbouring column. It would not have been intelligible to many if printed in Hebrew. The Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and translations from these, have not always rendered the names definitely enough. The Geneva version, a direct translation from the Hebrew, gives consistently the general name for God as its rendering of Elohim, while for the essential name it adopts the sufficiently expressive rendering "the Eternal." So he reproduces the Geneva version of Genesis in this columnar form; and afterwards goes on to show how such a view of the book clears away the various difficulties which have been a burden to commentators and weapons of attack for opponents of the faith. He wishes his readers not to make up their minds on a first reading. "When we have to undo a prejudice in which we have been brought up, we must accustom ourselves gradually to the opposite opinion and give time for the reasons for embracing it to act upon us, for pre-occupation (*prevention*) never yields but with difficulty and counterbalances for long the strongest proofs." It is all done on the intellectual plane, reverently towards its subject, respectfully towards the reader.

The Man.

What manner of man was Jean Astruc? I first met him in his latest work, *L'Art d'Accoucher réduit à ses Principes*, published in 1766, the year in which he died. Here he styles himself "*Professeur Royal du Médecine, et Médecin Consultant du Roi.*" He was a man, then, in the highest rank of his own profession. Of a well-connected family he was born in 1684, at Sauve, in Languedoc, in a Huguenot manse, and baptised in a Protestant Church. But he never knew himself as other than a professed Roman Catholic. Whilst he was but a child his father abjured his Protestant faith, took to the profession of law, and devoted himself to the education in literature and philosophy of his two sons, who never had any other teacher. The younger of the two died at a comparatively early age after a brilliant career as an Orator and Professor of French Law in the Faculty of Toulouse. Jean studied medicine at Montpellier, where he "sacrificed to the pleasure of study and observation all the amusements of his age and even the pardonable delights of Society"; published his first dissertation while only a Bachelor of Medicine, in 1702, obtained the same year the licence in medicine, and in 1703 the M.D. degree. In 1710 he won by competition the Chair of Anatomy and Medicine at Toulouse. In 1717 he filled a chair in Montpellier. The King of Poland called him to be his physician in 1729; but the following year he went to Paris, where libraries were accessible to him for the prosecution of his labours. Almost immediately he was honoured with the title of Consulting Physician to the King, and in 1731 was appointed to a Chair of Medicine in the Royal College. His lectures were marked by such graces of style that many people who had no interest in medicine attended them as models of beautiful Latinity. He was a ceaseless worker. "He might be seen in the coldest winter night, at an advanced age, studying at three in the morning without a fire by the light of a lamp." The Faculty of Medicine honoured him in 1743 by coöpting him unanimously as one of its members. "This unanimous vote of enlightened men, more precious to a man of science than all the favours which fortune sometimes flings indifferently to merit or to ignorance," Astruc much appreciated. He took a constant interest in the work of the Faculty and "visited the poor patients who came for advice on Saturdays as diligently as if he had nothing else to do." So he kept on working in old age, and though his infirmities

were aggravated by his great grief at the death of his only daughter the year before his own decease, he took an active share in the researches of a commission appointed by the Faculty to report on inoculation, and died in 1766, at the age of 82.

As he appears in his Works.

This and much more is recorded of him in a biographical sketch prefixed to a posthumous volume of *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier*, edited by his friend Dr. M. Lorry, who explains that the infirmities of advancing years led to his publishing some of the works such as the *Conjectures* for which he had long been collecting material. In the preface to his *Histoire Naturelle de Languedoc*, Astruc says he hesitated long about the publication, "because it seemed to me that it was not becoming in a person engaged in a very serious and very exacting profession to take himself up with researches in pure physics or literature. But at last love of country has carried me past this scruple, and I have let myself be persuaded that my present occupations do not prohibit the publication of a work composed long ago." This work has three divisions—geographical, physical, and literary. It is full of conjectures, as, e.g., in regard to the positions of places in old itineraries, and his knowledge of Hebrew enables him to correct mistaken conclusions that have been drawn from the itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela.

The preface to his Midwifery Manual[1] begins by explaining that he had never attended a case of labour! But having undertaken at the urgent desire of the Faculty of Medicine to deliver in 1745 a course of lectures to midwives, and being given six months in which to prepare, he set himself "to read or re-read all the treatises on the Art which had appeared in French or Latin within the previous thirty years." The course was a success. It was continued two years more with "new lectures, new extracts, new reflections." He had laid aside these Lectures on Midwifery until it was represented to him that, although the midwives in Paris and some other large towns received instruction, throughout the provinces generally they were untaught and might profit by the reading of his lectures. Still, he did not make up his mind till it occurred to him that it was the necessary complement to

[1] "Je multiplierai vos douleurs et vos grossesses; vous mettrez au monde vos enfants dans la douleur. Genèse, iii, 16," is printed on the back of the title-page.

a more important treatise[1] he published on the Diseases of Women. Needless to say, neither treatise is of value nowadays, either from a scientific or a practical point of view. But Astruc had a keen delight in laborious historical research, and he devoted sixty pages to a history of the Obstetric Art. About thirty years ago, at the instance of Principal Sir Alexander Grant, I drew up a history of the Edinburgh Chair of Midwifery, which proved to have been the first instituted in any University. Inquiring into the causes and date of the transference of obstetric practice from women to men, I had to quote Astruc as the recognised authority for the explanation that it was all a matter of fashion, resulting from the secret and successful management by a surgeon, at the instance of Louis XIV, of the delivery of Madame de la Vallière, after which the princesses all wished to be attended by surgeons, for whom the designation of "Accoucheurs" was coined and adopted into other languages. Having referred to his eminent position as a medical authority I added that "by pointing out the distinction between the Elohistic and Jehovistic passages in the Old Testament, he opened up a path for theologians along which the higher critics of our day have travelled to a length that would have greatly astonished him."

My justification for that remark rests on the acquaintance I had made many years earlier with an appendix to this same manual, called on the title-page *Une lettre sur la conduite qu'Adam et Eve dûrent tenir à la naissance de leurs premiers enfants.* I was working at a dissertation for the Royal Medical Society on the umbilical cord and its torsions, which I afterwards presented as my thesis for graduation with the motto—

"Deus aethere missus ab alto
tortos incidere funes
Ecce iterum stimulat,"

and among other readings came upon Astruc's letter. I had no occasion to make use of it, though it may have suggested the motto. But the memory of its quaint conceits and the näive suggestion that God himself came down to give Adam and Eve the first lesson in midwifery remained with me. It has this interest that it is the last output of all Astruc's activity.

The letter, eighteen pages in length, was occasioned by the quandary

[1] In the preface he has a sentence "against blindly following our own imaginations and substituting conjectures, hypotheses and mere suppositions for truths."

into which his friend, Mr. F. D. B., was thrown by a "philosopher[1] of the time," who propounded to him a puzzle as to how Adam and Eve comported themselves on the birth of their first children. Did they tie and cut the umbilical cord as we now do? How did they know what to do? Who taught them? They had been created without an an umbilicus and had never seen a child born. Did they not tie and cut,[2] then the children must all have died, and there was an end of the race? "You tell me, Sir," writes Astruc, "that this objector has embarrassed you, and you beg me to show you how to reply. But you seem to me to be greatly shocked with the air of complacency and the tone of mockery with which it has been proposed to you. Don't you know that that is the way with these gentry? Full of the sublimity of their lights, they think that the least difficulty they bring forward ought to upset truths the most worthy of respect. But they do not long enjoy this vain triumph. Answer them, and they are confounded. It is the case of him of whom Horace says :—

'Qui fragili quaerens illidere dentem,
Offendit solido.'

"This is exactly the case of your philosopher. Nothing more frivolous than his objection. I send you three or four answers, that he may have his choice of them. They are all plausible. I might say they are all solid."

(1) "Adam must have been greatly surprised to see the after-birth attached to Cain by the cord, but he let it alone, till in five or six days it fell off. He profited by the observation, and when Abel was born, he cut the cord. Seeing some blood escape he tied it, and so from the birth of the second child the deligation and division of the umbilical cord began to be practised by which the human race was saved.

(2) "Adam while still in Paradise had given names to all the creatures and must have observed how some of them gnawed the umbilical cord of their young at birth without loss of blood. When his wife, expelled with him from the earthly Paradise, began to give birth to children he may have cut through the cord with his teeth, as

[1] A French variety of the species of which Addison sketches a specimen (*Spectator*, September 5, 1712), who sets up for a free-thinker and is an atheist as much as his parts will give him leave. Mr. B. invites Astruc to answer his philosopher as Will Dry was called on to shut up Tom Puzzle.

[2] He has noted elsewhere that by the Greeks the practitioners of midwifery were called ὠμφαλοτόμοί.

savages used to do when the French first landed in Brazil. If any bleeding followed he would naturally tie.

(3) "I go even further, and I suppose that Adam, disliking the sight of placenta and cord hanging from Cain pulls them off. What then? 'Certain death to Cain,' says your philosopher. Not at all."

Through a series of pages of reasoning and citation of authorities, Astruc shows that such an accident is not necessarily fatal, and concludes that Adam may so have treated Cain without harm and without the loss of the human race.

F. D. B. might give the philosopher his choice of any of these solutions of his difficulty. "They are all plausible and conclusive. For myself, Sir, I do not adopt any of them, but I believe you can answer your philosopher in a manner more general and decisive."

(4) "I believe that God, who taught the birds to build their nests, and the quadrupeds how to deal with their young, taught Adam what to do to save his children at birth." "It is certain that he deigned to give instruction to men at the beginning of the world in matters of much less importance." He had taught Adam whilst still in the earthly Paradise to speak, so as to be able to name the animals: he taught Cain how to till the ground and Tubal-cain how to work in metals. "Why should we not say," he repeats, "that God had taught Adam what was needful to be done for the preservation of his newborn children, supposing he had left anything to his care."

(5) Astruc would have his correspondent round upon his assailant. "These gentry think themselves quite strong in their attacks: they are quite weak when they are put on the defensive." Either, the race began by the creative will of God; or, it exists of necessity and from all eternity. If the philosopher admits the first alternative, he only differs from the Church in giving an earlier date to the origin of the race and his difficulty remains. To adopt the other alternative is to admit the palpable absurdity of a *necessary series of contingent individuals*, which is a manifest contradiction. Either, the men of this series have learnt by repeated observations the necessity of tying the cord, and, in that case, before they had acquired the knowledge the race would have had time to perish, or this knowledge was in them necessary and innate. Thus you have a new absurdity; which need not surprise us, for absurdities evoke one another. Admit for the first man of the created series the same knowledge as innate but not necessary, for it was given by God. So the assailant is foiled with his own weapons, despoiled of their impiety.

"Show this letter, Sir, to your Philosopher. If he is willing to read it with care, I hope it will shake the confidence he has in his opinions. But I desire that my reflections may have a yet happier success and that they may guide him to fair reason and persuade him to have more respect for the truths of revelation." This, I note again, is the last expression we have of Astruc's active mind.

If we look back into some of his other writings we get just such an impression of the man as arises from an unprejudiced reading of the preface to his *Conjectures*. His greatest and best known work is that on Venereal Diseases written at first in Latin. It has been a mine of information for syphilologists interested in historical research. As regards the origin of this disease he strongly advocates the opinion that it was of recent development. Quoting in the preface from Lucretius—

"Medio de fonte Leporum
Surgat amari aliquid,"

he says, "In the midst of sensual pleasure there arises something bitter, nay very bitter, which plague, neither seen nor heard of in ancient times seems lately to have escaped out of Pandora's box, as a bitter dreg reserved for this wicked age, either by way of bridle to restrain our ungoverned lust or of a whip to punish it." In one of his notes he hopes he will never come under the censure of Scribonius Largus "who, although he was a heathen, expressed himself so much in the manner of a Christian that he may rise up in judgment with not a few of the Christians and condemn them. Such (says he) 'as discover the usefulness of certain remedies and keep it a secret are very much to be blamed, being guilty of the crime of envy, which ought to be hated by all mankind, but especially by physicians who if they do not abound with that compassion and humanity which ought always to attend the profession, deserve to be detested both by gods and men.'"

In book 1, chap. iv, he declares that "It is much against my inclination to bring in the Sacred Scriptures into a subject of this kind, but I am forced to it by those who contend for the antiquity of the venereal disease, who omit nothing that can be thought of in order to support their opinion, while they hope to cull anything out of them in favour of their subject. But they only expose their ignorance by affecting too much knowledge and show more learning than judgment in quoting those very passages which, if examined with sufficient diligence and accuracy are plainly rather against them than otherwise." Then follow discussions through a series of paragraphs in his orderly

fashion on (1) leprosy, (2) some references in the Mosaic Laws, (3) Job's boils which they interpret to Job's discredit, and which Astruc takes to be of the nature of elephantiasis, and (4) "They are at a great deal of pains, and labour very assiduously to asperse David with that scandal of which we have cleared Job." Astruc agrees with the majority of commentators that the Psalmist's complaint "ought to be understood, not of bodily sickness, but of the mind diseased by sin: . . . . . ought not to be taken in a literal sense, as relating to complaints of an infirm and sickly body, but to the tortures of a grieved and penitent mind." In his history of Montpellier he has occasion to speak of Rabelais and censures his "impious allusions to the words of the sacred books and profanation of what is most to be respected in religion."

Professional Estimates.

We may gather the impression made by Astruc on his medical brethren from the eight columns (the conjoint work of Chaussier and Adelon) that are devoted to him in the *Biographie Universelle Ancienne et Moderne*, 1811. Referring to his having been trained at Montpellier, where the misleading mechanical system of Boerhaave had displaced the chemical theories of Silvius, the writers say, "Astruc, whom Nature had endowed with a mind upright (*esprit droit*) but not active enough of himself to preconceive any high truth, followed the false direction, and in all the course of his long and laborious career, if he showed himself profound and able in the science of books, he was backward in the rigorous way of observation and research, in a word his speculative and practical medicine in place of being Hippocratic and vital was entirely mechanical and mathematical. However, few men won so great a reputation among his contemporaries. Astruc, as regards theory, owed his success to his natural eloquence and to a spirit of method, which setting him to divide the subject he ought to develop made him move from one division of his theme to the other by rigorous definitions. This made him a fascinating professor, whilst his zeal for study and his prodigious memory made him an erudite man. As regards practice, his reputation was due to a spirit of reserve and circumspection which usually led the medical practitioner to a wise expectancy by which he replaces the precious but rare quality of medical tact. Astruc had not in theory any of the large views which go to the deep foundations of a philosophy of medicine, nor, in practice, the rapid and sure perception which judges at once and without the risk of the least error the move-

ments of Nature in diseases. This, in fact, is not to be found in any of his numerous writings."

The same biographers speak of him again as "endowed with a prodigious memory, an upright mind, but cold and not very original, capable rather of receiving an impulse than given to publish it, but that he established 'order in his vast works of erudition.'" He engaged in various medical controversies, among others on the nature of digestion with Professor Pitcairn, of Edinburgh, as to whether it was more a physical (Pitcairn) or a chemical (Astruc) process. Each went wrong in his negation. Referring to this contention, in which I have to confess that my countryman wrote of Astruc in very unparliamentary language, they say "His writings may at least be cited as a model of courtesy in controversies." As to the treatises that specially interest theologians, they say, "We have said that metaphysics was one of his favourite occupations. In 1753 it inspired him to write *Conjectures*, and soon thereafter, to dispel the doubts his work had raised regarding his orthodoxy, he published two dissertations on *Immortality* and on the *Immateriality* and *Liberty of the Soul.* The *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, 1854, says of Astruc, "Love of work and desire to increase the domain of science prevailed above all other sentiment in him. He won without seeking them honour and fortune, and sacrificed everything to the taste that dominated him."

DISCUSSION.

The PRESIDENT (Dr. Norman Moore) : Astruc is chiefly known to medical men as the historian of the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier—but there were many lines of thought with which his name was connected. The suspicions entertained by worthy theologians as to Astruc's moral character may be dismissed. He was a man of great industry and of an inquiring mind ; a student of local history and of the natural history of races, and of languages, especially that of Languedoc. Beloved by students, respected by all in Toulouse, he was elected by the ruling classes of the country, whose liberties he defended, to the important position of captal. These are not the materials of which profligate villains are made, and in this country at all events people are assumed to be innocent until found guilty. A point of interest in Astruc's medical career was that he first took the degree of B.M., then became a Licentiate in Medicine, and finally an M.D. Such a sequence is quite unfamiliar at the present day, but it was customary at Cambridge until fairly recent times. The late Dr. Robert Martin followed exactly the same course.

Dr. J. SKINNER (Westminster College, Cambridge), after thanking the Section for the opportunity afforded to visitors of hearing a most instructive lecture, said: I approach the subject from the point of view of a Hebraist and an Old Testament student. I am interested in Astruc as the discoverer of the clue to the analysis of the Pentateuch in the alteration of the divine names, Jehovah and Elohim, in the book of Genesis. Scholars generally are aware that Astruc stood in the front rank of the medical profession of his day, but his work in that department and the range of his mental activity are perhaps little known among them, and they naturally welcome any light that can be thrown on his character and reputation. The fact that a discovery of such epoch-making magnitude was due to an amateur in biblical criticism is a convincing proof of great acumen and originality on the part of its author: at the same time it is one of several instances in the history of science—for example, Priestley's discovery of oxygen in 1776—where an untrained mind, free from the prepossessions of the specialist, was successful in forming a theory which satisfied experts, although it did not occur to any of themselves. There are two points on which I should desire clearer knowledge. One is the attack on Astruc's morals, made many years ago by Professor Osgood in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. I am inclined to accept the Chairman's view, that Astruc's record of intellectual activity is a sufficient defence against the charge of profligate living. The second point is as to Astruc's competence as a Hebrew scholar. In a recent controversy on the critical value of the divine names as an instrument of analysis, it was alleged that Astruc was totally ignorant of Hebrew, and based his investigation solely on his French Bible. Even if that were true it would detract nothing from the importance of his discovery; for the Geneva version which he used correctly represents the divine names of the Massoretic text, and was as safe a guide for Astruc's immediate purpose as the Hebrew text itself. Still it is reassuring to learn from the lecture that Astruc had a sufficient knowledge of Hebrew to be able to study the documents in the original. It has been a great pleasure to listen to Sir A. Simpson's lucid and informing paper.

Dr. I. ABRAHAMS (Christ's College, Cambridge): Astruc's "Genesis" is well known to students of the Hebrew Scriptures, but Sir A. Simpson in his charming discourse has revealed Astruc's personality. The charge that Astruc was morally a "profligate" was a not unusual controversial device, just as that earlier Bible critic, Spinoza, had been assailed for the opposite fault, his supposed cold, austere, passionless detachment from the ordinary interests of men. It would be well, however, that the charge against Astruc should be fully probed. As to his work, it has stood the test of time wonderfully, and the "documentary" theory of Genesis still holds the field. Very important, moreover, is the fact that even if Astruc's criterion (the use of the divine names) had been weakened (which is not the case, as Dr. Skinner has shown), his work would nevertheless be assured of lasting fame, in that it has been the cause of a vast amount of fruitful research on the structure of the Pentateuch.

Dr. A. E. GARVIE (New College, London): I thank the Section for the opportunity of hearing so interesting a paper as that Sir Alexander Simpson has just submitted, and I would refer to four points suggested by it: (1) The views on midwifery of Astruc might well make one doubtful of his judgment on other matters, did not these views depend on the knowledge of his age, while his *Conjectures* on the composition of Genesis had their basis in observed facts. (2) The attack on his character to discredit his initial opinions could only undermine the position of those who stooped to use such weapons, as argument should be met by argument and not by insinuations against the character of an opponent. (3) The opponents of these critical views are only too ready to snatch any weapon, however dangerous it may be to those who use it, the latest weapon being a view which brings the value of the Massoretic text of the Old Testament into doubt in a very important respect—the use of the divine names. (4) Astruc disproved the wisdom of the saying that "a shoemaker should stick to his last," as he had made a more valuable contribution to biblical scholarship than to his own science of medicine. While I should not even venture to suggest that medicine could learn anything from theology, I gladly acknowledge the debt theology owes to medicine in Astruc.

Sir WILLIAM OSLER: The literary output of a long life shows Astruc to have been a hard-working, painstaking student, and we are all very much indebted to Sir Alexander Simpson for reminding the profession of the important position he occupies in the history of Biblical criticism. Some months ago I was shocked to read in an address by the Rev. A. C. Dixon on "The Bible and the Origin of Life," reported in the *Times* of June 14 last, the statement that the father of modern Biblical criticism, though a man of considerable learning, was of profligate life. In the medical biographies there is no hint of anything to justify such a remark, but Sir Alexander Simpson called my attention to an extraordinarily bitter criticism of Astruc by Professor Howard Osgood in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, January, 1892, vol. iii. The main contention is that he was the intimate friend and paramour of Madame de Tencin, perhaps the most famous of the infamous Court circle of that day and the mother of the great d'Alembert, whom as an infant she had deserted. At her death all her property went to Astruc. I must say Professor Osgood tells a hard story of Astruc, but it is chiefly of his associations, and the sources are drawn from bitter enemies of the Jesuits, with whom Astruc was associated. And we must remember what Montaigne says, that a man may sail over troubled waters without fishing in them. About the *Conjectures*, Professor Osgood quotes from Voltaire a statement that Astruc and his son-in-law, Silhouette, who was a candidate for some Government position, bought up all the copies in the kingdom, "and that is the reason why they have become so rare at present." Altogether, I feel that we should accept the charitable opinion of our President on the distinguished author of the *Conjectures*.